



6 October 2021

Dear Head of Centre

We hope the start to the new academic year is going as well as possible for you, your staff, and your learners. We understand there are still many challenges for centres in navigating the updated public health advice and supporting learners who are still being affected by the impact of the pandemic. Awarding grades to learners in summer 2021 was a huge effort for centres and we thank you for your work to achieve this in challenging circumstances.

We would like to update you on the arrangements on exams and assessments in 2021/2022.

### **Winter series 2021/22 - GCSEs**

We wrote to schools and colleges in May and July 2021, confirming that the November series for GCSEs in English Language, Mathematics, Mathematics-Numeracy and Welsh Language would go ahead. We also confirmed that the adapted assessment requirements put in place by WJEC would apply to this exam series. Details are available on WJEC's [website](#). The adaptations will also apply to GCSE units available in January 2022 (English Literature and Welsh Literature) and to Skills Challenge Certificate components submitted in January 2022.

### **Summer 2022 – GCSEs, AS and A levels**

As previously announced, in summer 2022 GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications will be assessed via exams and, where applicable, non-examination assessment (NEA). In recognition of the disruption to teaching and learning for learners sitting GCSEs, AS

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and A levels and the Skills Challenge Certificate Qualifications in summer 2022, the assessment requirements have been adapted. These adaptations have been put in place for summer 2022 to support learners and make the exams fairer for them.

WJEC published GCSE and AS and A level summer 2022 adaptations booklets covering each subject on their secure website in July, so that centres could access the information. They published these details on their public website in the week beginning 13 September - [WJEC: GCSE, AS and A level adaptations](#). WJEC published the [Skills Challenge Certificate](#) adaptations earlier in the summer term.

### **Grading GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2022**

With the return to exams, WJEC will award grades to learners in summer 2022. We want the grading process to be as fair as possible to learners and reflect the disruption to teaching and learning that they have experienced. We have explored the views of stakeholders and have also considered the approaches being implemented by qualification regulators in other parts of the UK.

For summer 2022, we have decided to align with the approach being taken in England, to ensure that learners in Wales are not disadvantaged relative to other learners. That is, to treat 2022 as a transition year to reflect that we are in a pandemic recovery period and learners' education has been disrupted. In 2022 we will aim, therefore, for results to reflect broadly a midway point between 2021 and 2019. In 2023 we will aim to return to results that are in line with those in pre-pandemic years.

As in summer 2021, it is a priority that the grades learners achieve support their progress on to the next stage of their learning and/or employment. We will continue to work with other regulators across the UK so that the grading process is consistent and fair for learners.

We feel this is the best compromise, balancing the interests of learners in 2022, who through no fault of their own have had disrupted teaching and learning experiences, with fairness to learners past and future.

The decision on the approach to grading GCSEs, AS and A levels will have an impact on certain vocational qualifications used for similar purposes, including progressing to further study. We will require awarding bodies to take account of the approach taken for GCSEs and A levels when setting standards in vocational qualifications so that vocational learners are not disadvantaged compared to learners taking GCSE and A level.

### **Contingency approach for GCSEs, AS and A levels - summer 2022**

In summer 2022 learners will be assessed in the usual way, by exams and/or non-examination assessments with suitable adaptations. We will work with WJEC to

explore any further adaptations that could be introduced if the disruption continues to have a significant impact on schools and colleges. However, if despite these steps, the exam series is cancelled, then a contingency approach will be needed.

Recognising the significant effort to implement an alternative approach last year and the success of that approach in allowing learners to progress, we will base the contingency on the Centre Determined Grade (CDG) approach from summer 2021. In the event of a decision being made to cancel the exam series, centres will again be asked to award learners grades on the basis of evidence of attainment across the qualification. However, we want to improve some aspects of the approach including measures to avoid over assessment and reducing the reliance upon whole past papers where learners have had access to known mark schemes. We are mindful of the pressures on both learners and centres of the additional assessments implemented last year and therefore in the main we are expecting centres to use assessments that they already have planned as part of their teaching and learning programmes.

We are working with WJEC to update guidance and plan to release further details in November but in the meantime centres should:

- continue to carry out their usual assessments that are used to inform judgements on learner progress in each course. These might be more substantial assessments such as end of topic tests, NEA practice assessments, mock exams, and practical projects.
- inform learners that these assessments could be used as evidence of attainment, should the contingency need to be implemented in 2022. It needs to be clear to learners that this does not mean that all and any work they complete might be used as evidence.
- review data processing privacy notices to take account of the possibility that centre assessments could be used as evidence of attainment if the contingency arrangements are implemented.

We would like to reiterate that these contingency arrangements will only be implemented if it is not possible for exams to take place.

### **Contingency approach for vocational qualifications**

Adaptations are in place for the assessment of vocational qualifications in 2021/22. These vary across awarding bodies depending on the purpose of the qualification and how they are structured and assessed. Check with your awarding body on the adaptations in place for the qualifications you are offering. Where vocational qualifications are assessed by examination, these will go ahead as planned in 2021/22.

As is the case for general qualifications, should there be further significant disruption that results in the cancellation of future examinations series, contingency arrangements will be put in place. Centre Determined Grades (Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) as they are often referred to in vocational qualifications) may be reintroduced for those qualifications that were eligible for a CDG/TAG in summer 2021. You can read more about the contingency arrangements for vocational qualifications that are available in both Wales and England [here](#).

### **Communications**

We have recently updated our website to try to make information as accessible as possible, especially for learners and we will send information to learners via schools in the coming weeks. We know that some learners may have concerns with the return to exams and we are planning a range of communications to support their understanding in the coming months.

Yours sincerely



Philip Blaker  
Chief Executive

